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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the development of higher education in Iran in the 19th and 20th centuries. It examines the role of Christian missionaries in the creation of Darolfunun, the first Western-style Iranian college, founded in 1851. The University of Teheran, based on French models, was founded in 1934. While Western influence on education in Iran was increasing, the traditional schools of higher education, the madrasahs, continued to flourish, albeit with declining government support. Even in the 1970s, with oil wealth providing the impetus for the creation of many Western-style universities, madrasahs continued to expand and attracts students to their traditional Islamic curriculum. Since the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79, the government has tried to cleanse universities of their Western values and curriculum, and unite the university- and madrasah-systems. Other recent trends in the administration of higher education in Iran are also discussed. Contains 29 references. (MDM)

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DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN PERSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE WESTERN STYLE

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in the area that is now Iran goes back to pre-Islamic times when the Zoroastrian religion (600 B.C.E. to 642 A.D.) was the official and popular faith.

Modern schools were introduced to Iran by Christian missionaries beginning in 1834. The first western style institution of higher learning in the country was established by European and Iranian educators in 1851. It was called the Darulfunun, or Poly-technical college, and was a state school intended to prepare civil servants and military personnel. During the next century, the graduates of the missionary schools and the Darulfunun and its successors became Iran's educational, political and economic leaders.

Widespread modernization of Iranian higher education began in 1925 when a faster pace of cultural change was initiated by the Pahlavi dynasty. It was claimed by the former Ministry of Education that, "... the rate of illiteracy in Iran decreased from 90 percent in 1920 to 36.9 percent in 1978." Educational opportunities for women were expanded to the point where many women had become leaders in Iranian higher education.

Higher education in Iran, However, has had an important social role to play in the people's lives and in socioeconomic development both before and after the Revolution. During approximately twenty years prior to 1978, many American higher educators and institutions of higher education were involved in developing Iranian colleges and universities. Thousands of young Iranians studied at institutions of higher learning in the United States. These former linkages were abruptly terminated by Iran's new rulers after the establishment of the Islamic Republic. This investigation is designed to analyze and interpret the relationships and interfacing between the American and Iranian systems of higher education before and after the Revolution.

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DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN PERSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE WESTERN STYLE

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Missionaries

It was early in the nineteenth century that European missionaries started coming to Persia. Most of the missionaries selected to be in the northwestern part of the country. The rationale for that perhaps was the closeness of this area to Europe and a higher degree of exposure to western culture and values there. Another reason pershps was that most of the Iranian Christians lived in the northern part of Iran which very close to Europe. Conducting religious ceremonies and opening schools for the Iranian Christians were the missionaries' primary duties.

Following the European missionaries, American missionaries started coming to Iran.

> The first American missionary group, the Congregationalists (the American Board in Boston) chose Rezaeh as the site of their mission and in the 1834 assignment Dr. Perkins directed its activities. He established a boys' school, also referred to as the Male Seminary at Rezayeh in 1836. In 1878 the school was re-organized as a college; besides offering an academic program, it gave industrial, theological, and medical courses. Almost all the boys who studied in these schools were Nestorians and Armenians, but the missions were eager to work among the Muslims, too.1

Rezayeh was a suitable town to start their missions, because the town was not entirely a Muslim community, its population included a large number of Nestorians and Armenians. The town also was relatively close to European countries. Some of citizens had already been exposed to western ways and modern educational thought. Because of the missionaries' efforts,

> ...a Muslim boys' school, called Marefat, was begun in 1904 and in 1909 five boys graduated from it. Two years later

> the school merged with the college to become the American school for Boys. In 1913 the college had 120 Muslim students, some from leading families.2

The missionary activities led to a college being established;

> About 1915 the Mission purchased forty-four acres of land on what is now Shah Reza Avenue, where a college was built. Affiliated with the elementary and high school program, the American (Albors) College opened in 1925. It received a charter from the Board of Regents of the State of New York, thus making it an accredited liberal arts college.3

Additional information tells us that,

> Alborz High School and College in its last graduation ceremony in 1940, awarded 106 junior college diplomas and 20 baccalaureate degrees, of whom four were women. Until 1934 in most large cities of Iran such as Tehran, Tabriz, Rasht, and Hamadan, American missionary schools were established, having more than 12 hundred male and female students in kindergarten, middle and college levels.4

Just before Mohammad Mussadigh's coup d'etat, three advisors recruited by the United States Office of Education were sent to Tehran in June 1951. "The educational division was established in July. The three education advisors were each assigned to each Ostan (Province)."5

Some Americans also came to Iran whose work included economic and financial advisory missions which directly and indirectly added some new cultural and educational exposure to the Iranian university system. Among them were Mr. Schuster, a financial advisor, and Mr. Millspaugh, an economist who went to Iran in 1907 and again in 1922. In this regard Mr. B. Rubin, an analyst of Iranian culture and politics, claims that,

> The Persians had more success with a new mission of American financial advisors, led by Arthur Millspaugh, who worked in Iran...he had taught economics at several universities

> before joining the United States government, where he enjoyed some success in Iran, and many of his experiences were as frustrating as those faced by shuster some fifteen years earlier.6

American missionaries, through the missionary schools, particularly Alborz College, and their religious activities in Iran, had paved the way for other American educational agents to come to Iran. They may also have given the Iranians two ideas: a) to establish their own independent western-style college; and b) to become attracted to the western cultural and educational ideologies in order to solve educational, economical, and political problems of the time and provide greater social mobility.

The Survival of the Madraseh

From the formation of Darolfunun, (1853) the first western-style Iranian college, it took over a half a century for Iran to establish its second institution of higher education, called Darol-Moallemin-e Ali, and later called Daneshsara-ye Ali (1928), now known as the Teachers' Education University. Later on in 1934 the first Iranian university, the University of Tehran, based on French models was established. The formation and growth of the Iranian higher education system has been explained by George Lenczowski.

> The old Darulfunun with its six departments had declined already under Qajar rule and by the time of Reza's advance to power it was clear that a new start had to be made. The first step, taken in 1928, was to create an Arts and Science Faculty, first called Dar al-Moallemin-e Ali and later renamed Daneshsara-ye Ali (Teacher's Education University). In 1934 a final law was issued creating an autonomous University of Tehran with six faculties...By the mid-1907's the university counted fifteen distinct units.7

After the establishment of Tehran University, the development and growth of similar institutions took place at a fairly slow pace compared to the decades of the seventies and

eighties. Particularly after 1974, the income of natural resources of Iran rapidly increased. By 1978, Iran had 243 institutions of higher education, including twenty-one major universities, which it was believed were too many for such a traditional and religious society.

> ...Considering this rapid development in higher education, fears were expressed that too many universities, particularly if brought into being too quickly, would not be able to keep the intended high standards, for intellectual quality could not be produced ad libitum.8

Interestingly, as the modern Iranian higher education was growing, the traditional Iranian higher institutions, the madrasahs, were also still functioning. They received little attention from the government but more children of the poor and the working class masses attended these institutions. The local religious leaders, bazar people, and some school teachers kept the madrasah running through their financial and administrative support. Fischer argues the function of the madrasah went along with the expansion of the university.

> ...what is of primary interest is to recognize that the madrasah students have become an isolated minority, many of whom are trying to get a secular education also so that they will have more job options. Although in 1976 some 300,000 people competed in the entrance exams for 30,000 university places, there were only 11,000 students at all levels in the madrasah. The power and influence of the madrasah lies elsewhere than in numbers or institutional centrality. It lies in a symbolic centrality. It is the repository of a tradition out of which the various religious ideologies of the several Iranian social classes are constructed.9

Along with the growth and expansion of westernized higher education, the madrasah structure was becoming stronger too. Fischer analyses the structure of the madrasah;

> Although the madrasah system that developed in Iran was not a state system on the nizamiyya or ottoman models, yet it was statewide and international. There was a standard curriculum. There was teacher certification: ijazas or letters of

> permission were given by recognized scholars to certify that one was qualified to teach specified items. Students started their ABCs in the local maktab (elementary school), often run by women. Boys might proceed from the maktab to provincial towns for the lower levels of education. Then they went to the larger cities for the upper levels, ultimately trying to go where the most reknowned scholars lectured. The madrasahs and students were supported by religious "ithes" (the sahm-i Imam, or "share of the Imam," ...the sahm-i Imam and voluntary contributions have provided a major source of independence for the religious institutions, although paradoxically also a source of anti-innovative conservatism.10

The financial independence, free faculty, staff and buildings kept madrasahs alive and active without interrupting the growing western-style university. Occasionally some graduate of madrasahs entered the university as a graduate student or became a faculty member. In fact, a college of Islamic Theology was added to the structure of Tehran University, which was a French model institution. Ayatollah Morteza Motahary, theoretician of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, a graduate and faculty member of the Madrasah Ilmieh of Qum, held a professorship in the Ilahiyat (theology) college of the University of Tehran before the Iranian Islamic Revolution. He held two titles; first, Professor and Doctor (a title produced by the secular higher education system) and second, Ayatollah (purely a religious and Islamic concept). Many of his students and colleagues are the leaders of the Islamic Republic at the present time.

The madrasahs never stopped their expansion during the formation and the growth of modern secular or the western-style of higher education in Iran. Particularly during the 1970's, which was a decade of rapid growth for secular higher education, the madrasah also flourished. Several madrasahs were established in this period. Fischer told about this.

> ...the last and newest madrasah in Qum is the Madrasah

> Imam Amir al-Muminin, opened in 1974-75 by Naser Makaram. Its major activity is the large course in aqaid va madhab (doctrines and religion). It also teaches English and Kuran reading, has a letter-answering service and publishing section, and supports a group of aides to help Makarem with a tafsir or commentary on the Koran.11

So, the madrasahs not only did not deteriorate during the last three decades, but they had a rapid pace of growth along with the western-style institutions. This pace increased tremendously during and after the revolution.

For the past seven years, the new higher education leaders and the madrasah authorities have been trying to unify these two systems. But, what would be the products of a mixed secular and religious higher education systems?

Hojato-Islam Faker, a faculty member of Madrasah Ilmiyeh of Qum, regarding the unity of the madrasah and university claims that,

> It is our responsibility to keep madrasahs and the university function side by side by side based on Kuranic values. I believe that if these two systems work together in a cooperative way, we will overcome major problems of our higher education system. To do so we need to establish a powerful center for supervising the progress of unity of the university and madrasah...12

Dr. Shariatmadary, a university administrator and a permanent member of the Cultural Revolution Committee, states that,

> The separation of university and religious science is a major problem which must be considered and studied, historically. The madrasahs and Islamic universities of the past contained both religious sciences and secular studies.13

Mass establishment of institutions of higher education started in the 1970's. Oil income and the need of trained manpower for industry and government were the major

motive for establishing and rapidly developing many institutions of higher education. Right at the beginning of the Revolution in 1978, some 243 institutions of higher education were functioning in Iran. The figure includes twenty-one universities, and 149 training center institutions. The Iranian National Organization for Educational Evaluation, an official publication from the former government, claimed that in 1978,

> A visible manifestation of Iran's perspective toward education is the increased number of students enrolled in our educational institutions. Within the past decade alone, the number of students in post-secondary institutions has more than tripled. Today there are nearly 160,000 Iranians pursuing their education and training in 21 universities and 222 colleges and institutions.14

How were trained, high-level manpower resources provided for in this complicated higher education system which had included only seven major institutions of higher education in 1960's? This will be examined subsequently.

The Establishment of the Islamic Republic

As occurs in any developing society, any major change within the political system directly affects and causes change in the nation's higher education system. Iran was not exceptional in this case. The university itself had an important and effective role in changing the political system. So the question is, how this major change cause changes in the structure and organization of the higher education system itself? It is the function of this section to review the major historical changes that took place in the Iranian higher education system during the past seven years, beginning with the formation of the new Islamic government in 1979.

The years of 1978 and 1979 were ones of instability and basic changes for the Iranian

university system. Administrators, faculty and students spent most of their time participating in demonstrations. Classes were places for discussing and airing religious and political ideologies during the first year of the Revolution.

Immediately after the Revolution, the new government was concerned with the structure of higher education remaining from the former regime. A "Cultural Revolution Committee" was formed to Islamize universities in June, 1980, and generally to revolutionize the system of higher education. But the irregularities and political unrest inside the universities caused a shutdown of all institutions of higher education. There have been several reasons mentioned for this educational and political action. Ali Qaemi Amiry, a specialist in Islamic education, states that, "The original goal in forming the Cultural Revolution was to bring independence from the foreign system to our education."28 According to Mehi Bazargan, the first Prime Minister after the Revolution and a university faculty and administrator for several years;

> The Cultural Revolution emerged following the demonstrations and takeover of the University of Tehran by leftist students, and a revolutionary takeover took place by a group of Islamic students and the Cultural Revolution was announced. A group of specialists and religious leaders were assigned to form the Cultural Revolution Committee to Islamize the administration, curriculum, texts in the system of higher education and also to replace former faculty, administrators and staff with new Islamic people. Basically, Islamic beliefs, values and behavior had to be emphasized.15

This took place right after Ayatollah Khomeini's speech noting that,

> ...a fundamental revolution must be made in the universities, we are not unfamiliar with the university concept and education, we have had Mizamiehs (Iranian Islamic higher education institutions) for many years which were equal to the modern university, even before Islam we had University of

Jundi-Shapour.16

The implementation of the Cultural Revolution brought; a) an thoroughly Islamized higher education system, b) the formation of a Cultural Revolution Committee to do the Islamization and make fundamental changes in higher education, and c) eliminating political conflicts within the universities after complete Islamization. Some two hundred forty-two institutions of higher education were ordered closed in May of 1981 (Khordad 23, 1358 A.H.) for a basic Paksazi or cleansing. The higher education authorities believed that all universities had to be closed until the Islamization of the system was completed. The Ayatollah stated that,

> ...the universities have been a center to educate the students as westernized or easternized persons in the past years, so they must be shut down until they are deeply Islamized.17

Another of the Ayatollah's statements emphasized the need for a fundamental change and reform in the system of higher education:

> ...we are saying that our universities do not serve the best interests of our nation...we are saying that our universities are not training our youth with Islamic ethics, they do not included Islamic ethics and education, if they would, they would not become battlefields for those followers of harmful ideologies and beliefs. The universities must undergo a fundamental reform.18

The Cultural Revolution Committee spend two years preparing a major proposal for fundamental changes in all aspects of the system of higher education. One suggested change mentioned in the proposal was that students in all areas of studies must take some compulsory credits of Islamic studies.

> ...all students in higher education must take nineteen general basic credits in religious courses which are: Religious Thought, Foundations of Religion and Principles of Belief,

> Islamic Ideology, History of Islam and the Present Iranian Society and Islamic Revolution. Taking Arabic is compulsory for all students in every major field of studies.19

Higher education reopened its academic activities after two years by first opening the medical schools and later in December 18, 1981, the majority of institutions of higher education were functioning again. "...this date was named 'The Students and Clergy Unity Day" and 40,000 students took entrance examinations. At the same time a new International Islamic University was inaugurated in the city of Yezd..."20

One of the major changes that has taken place after the reopening of the universities must schedule two shifts of work because of the high number of students.

> ...we must utilize our faculty, administrators, buildings and labs two times a day, so we will be prepared to implement a plan for twenty years of which our higher education system will become self-sufficient...21

On August 1, 1980 a graduate Islamic university was established in Mashhad,

> ...a Great Islamic University was opened near the Shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad to offer graduate degrees. Faculty and Administrators are selected from the Howzeh (another name for madrasah) to administer this Islamic University.22

The "Islamic Study Association of Foreign Muslim Women" is a new society led by an English woman. It is a gathering place for western ladies residing in Iran and its mission is to promote and increase Islamic Knowledge and values and to create unity among the foreign Muslim women. Mrs Fatemeh Cadwar, a member of the Association, expressed her problems.

> ...speaking Persian is one of the major difficulties for the non-fluent women who are married to Iranians, this creates a problem when we need to communicate with the husbands' family. We must learn at least a few simple Persian sentences

before we enter Iran...23

That the Cultural Revolution Headquarters provided a constitution for the opening doctoral and Ph.D. programs for all majors fields of study at Iranian universities in October, 1984. "...the doctoral study period is three and a half to six years (maximum), and includes the highest degree with scientific and research activities, and the candidates must not be over forty years of age..."24

Another major change which took place in the Iranian higher education system after the Revolution, was a new policy of sending Iranian students to the developing countries instead of letting them come to the United States. The result on the America's side was that the:

> ...number of Iranian students in the U.S.A. was 51,310 in 1980. In 1984 this figure declined to 20260 students compared to the beginning of the Revolution. It is believed that the political problem between Iran and the U.S. are the causes of the decrease.25

Instead, for the past five years Iranian students were being sent to India, the Philippines and North Korea.

One major historical change that happened in the Iranian higher education system is a strong emphasis on German and French in the universities instead of English, which used to be the predominant foreign language in the higher education system as well as the secondary school system. The Vice Minister of Education in Research and Planning claims that,

> ...having only one foreign language (English) in schools will make the nation dependent on one culture and takes away the chances of options. We should give attention to the other languages, too. In order to have relations with other countries rather than English speaking ones we need to learn their languages. Therefore, we have prepared two new German and French texts which include Islamic values for the sixth

graders...26

After the revolution, and the Cleansing Plan, a shortage of faculty, administrators and socialized staff forced the authorities to come up with several new options. One of the options, according to the Minister of Culture and Higher Education, Dr. Iraj Fazel, is that, "...foreign faculty must be used on a temporary basis. We also must start training to meet our future need for human resources in our universities. Also, we must make it attractive for Iranian scholars to come back here..."27

Dr. Farhadi, the present Minister of Culture and Higher Education, concerning shortages of faculty, and the increased number of students and college education abroad, claimed that,

> We hired one hundred highly qualified foreign faculty members for our universities (mostly from Indian universities). They are working for us, and we are going to hire more in the future. We also going to be sending one thousand students abroad each year. For the next decade we will have one million students in our higher education institutions. We also going to get together in Turkey and Pakistan's higher education authorities to develop higher educational relations and cooperation among our universities.28

Farhadi, also stated that,

> ...foreign faculty members who are interested in teaching at our universities are welcome, particularly those from Islamic countries. We are also planning to establish an International Islamic University so that foreign Muslim students could come to our country to study.29

Concluding Remarks

Higher education in the area that is now Iran goes back to pre-Islamic times when the Zoroastrian religion (600 B.C.E. to 642 A.D.) was the official and popular faith.

Modern schools were introduced to Iran by Christian missionaries beginning in 1834. The first western style institution of higher learning in the country was established by European and Iranian educators in 1851. It was called the Darulfunun, or Poly-technical college, and was a state school intended to prepare civil servants and military personnel. During the next century, the graduates of the missionary schools and the Darulfunun and its successors became Iran's educational, political and economic leaders.

Widespread modernization of Iranian higher education began in 1925 when a faster pace of cultural change was initiated by the Pahlavi dynasty. It was claimed by the former Ministry of Education that, "... the rate of illiteracy in Iran decreased from 90 percent in 1920 to 36.9 percent in 1978." Educational opportunities for women were expanded to the point where many women had become leaders in Iranian higher education.

As it is evident from this brief survey, higher education in Iran has carried indiginious influences from the ancient time with a strong moral and ethical impacts from the religious institutions of region.

Higher education in Iran, However, has had an important social role to play in the people's lives and in socioeconomic development both before and after the Revolution. During approximately twenty years prior to 1978, many American higher educators and institutions of higher education were involved in developing Iranian colleges and universities. Thousands of young Iranians studied at institutions of higher learning in the United States. These former linkages were abruptly terminated by Iran's new rulers after the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

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